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Work of the Fourteenth Meeting of Experts on the United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report contains the main findings and recommendations of the Fourteenth Meeting of Experts on the United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance, held at United Nations Headquarters from 4 to 8 May 1998. The Meeting explored current issues of governance, public administration and finance, and reviewed the United Nations work programme in those areas in the light of General Assembly resolution 50/225 of 19 April 1996. It made recommendations for action at both the national and international levels.

The Fourteenth Meeting of Experts called for an effective response to the challenges that face the governance and administrative systems of all countries and condition their capacity to implement commitments made at major global conferences organized by the United Nations during the current decade. Specifically, in relation to the developing countries or countries with economies in transition, the Meeting recommended that the Programme in Public Administration and Finance focus attention on four broad areas of need:

(a) **Management of change**: the State must be in the forefront of implementing change and smoothing the path for progress. This entails proactive measures to develop enabling policy frameworks, promote the use of new technologies, set up performance measurement and evaluation systems, overhaul administrative structures, and design adequate patterns for the collection of internationally comparable, reliable and accurate date for policy-making purposes;

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(b) **Institution-building and administrative reform**: in the light of current trends, bureaucratic structures no longer work effectively. De-bureaucratization and decentralization must go in tandem with new approaches to management exemplifying openness, adaptability, participation, flexibility, diversity and responsiveness. Many new tasks of governance require public authorities to act as mediators, advocates or promoters, actively seeking partnerships with business and non-governmental organizations, or otherwise endeavouring to engage civil society in the pursuit of developmental objectives;

© **Human resources development**: constantly upgrading skills, developing leadership qualities, facilitating change and fostering a new image for the public service call for new career structures that emphasize mobility, the importance of integrity and professionalism, and the overriding claims of merit in the recruitment, placement and promotion of public servants;

(d) **Information**: timely availability of adequate, reliable, accurate and relevant data has become a sine qua non not only for sound policy-making but also for the measurement, monitoring and evaluation of public-sector performance. The United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance can play a vital role in mobilizing and disseminating such information of vital importance to Governments, notably through the projected information clearing house.

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I. Introduction

1. The Fourteenth Meeting of Experts on the United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance was held at United Nations Headquarters, New York, from 4 to 8 May 1998, in accordance with decision 1997/222 of the Economic and Social Council. The Meeting of Experts was organized in pursuance of resolution 1199 (XLII) adopted by the Economic and Social Council on 26 May 1967. This was the second meeting since the resumed fiftieth session of the General Assembly, which was convened from 15 to 19 April 1996 expressly for the purpose of exploring the relationship of public administration to development and the role of the United Nations in this regard.

2. Against this background and the recommendations of the preceding session of the Expert Group (27 May to 4 June 1997), the Fourteenth Meeting of Experts adopted a programmatic approach with the twofold objective of (a) reviewing the Programme in Public Administration and Finance in the light of the recent restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations Secretariat, and (b) setting guidelines and directions for the Programme both for the current biennium and for the period 2000-2001. In 1997, the Thirteenth Meeting of Experts had sought to identify the critical new challenges in a rapidly changing environment for public administration worldwide. Under the overall theme of "Redesigning the State for socio-economic development and change", the Meeting had deliberated on five principal areas of global concern: (a) promoting an enabling environment for sound governance; (b) enhancing the professionalism, ethical values and image of the public service; © rethinking the State for socio-economic development; (d) creating an enabling environment for private sector development; and (e) strengthening governmental capacity in the mobilization, management and accountability of financial resources. This time around, a programmatic approach suggested the following themes as particularly relevant: (a) the relationship between public administration and the implementation of commitments made at major United Nations conferences, and (b) key issues and emerging trends in governance. The latter encompassed a number of further themes, on which background working papers were prepared, namely: (I) key issues and emerging trends in public administration; (ii) key issues and emerging trends in public finance and private-sector development; (iii) approaches and guidelines for monitoring, measuring and evaluating performance in public sector programmes; and (iv) a legal and regulatory framework for private-sector development. Related to the above, the agenda included the topic "Basic data on public administration and finance for policy-making purposes". Other items covered were the following: (a) review of the United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance; (b) implementation of the United Nations information clearing house; © coordination with other United Nations bodies and the specialized agencies; (d) presentations by the International Institute of Administrative Sciences, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and several countries on their respective programmes and experience in governance, public administration and finance; and (e) adoption of the report of the Fourteenth Meeting.

II. Recommendations

A. Recommendations requiring action by the Economic and Social Council

3. **The Meeting of Experts recommends that the Fifteenth Meeting of Experts in Public Administration and Finance take place during the first quarter of the year 2000.**

4. **The Meeting of Experts also recommends that the Secretary-General conduct a five-year assessment of the progress made in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/225 on public administration and development, and report his findings to the General Assembly through the Council in the year 2001.**

B. Recommendations brought to the attention of the Council

Public administration and the implementation of commitments made at major United Nations conferences

5. **Sound governance and decentralization**: the United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance should **assist Governments in examining their role in promoting social justice, equity and democratization, and in enhancing public trust in government through the balanced pursuit of efficiency, devolution of responsibilities and citizen participation**. This would include, *inter alia*, assisting Governments in developing modalities for popular participation, through information dissemination, use of media, building of local skills and institutional capacities, and strengthening of civil society.

6. **Policy analysis: the United Nations should conduct policy analyses on the interface of policy and administration, and should provide policy advisory services and disseminate information on best practices in this area**. Specifically, the Programme could assist countries in translating the content of the United Nations resolutions into policy, legislation and action. It is crucial to identify strategic entry points where the work of the Programme would have the most beneficial impact. The Programme could also assist in the **formulation of performance indicators of progress** toward implementation of the resolutions in question; could conduct an assessment of selected representative countries with the purpose of examining trends, analysing the constraints to implementation; and could make recommendations on how to improve national capacities. Such action-oriented research activities could result in the production of publications that would act as guidebooks, translating the content of the resolutions into checklists, information exchange on alternatives, best practices and mechanisms that would lead to fulfilment of the objectives of conference resolutions.

7. **Management reform**: there is a need to restructure the public sector in a less hierarchical and more coordinated manner in order to meet national needs, including cross-cutting issues raised by global conferences. The Programme should **assist Member States in delivering public-sector services more efficiently, with due regard to gender, ecological, human rights and other considerations.**

8. **Professionalism**: the United Nations Programme should assist Member States that are seeking to **reorient public-sector culture toward responsiveness to the needs and expectations of citizens**. It should **articulate a set of values, norms and principles on efficiency and accountability, which would lay a solid basis for a public service culture, embracing standards of ethical behaviour, responsiveness and service orientation**.

9. **Information**: bearing in mind the differing levels of access to resources and technology among Member States, the United Nations should **mobilize information on critical issues, through policy analysis on best practices and programmes, and by offering networking and clearing house services to Governments**, which would help them to implement all the action plans, programmes and goals set at the various United Nations conferences.

10. **Regional integration**: the United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance should **assist Governments, at their request, to prepare and train their public servants, facilitating linkages within and among regions, encouraging the cross-fertilization of ideas and upgrading national and local capacities**.

Key issues and emerging trends in governance

11. In terms of the direction of the United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance, **the Meeting takes the view that it should build communication bridges between cutting-edge ideas and cost-effective practices, highlighting the relationship and interaction between concerns in governance and those in public administration**. Acknowledging the differences among Member States that are reflected in varying country needs, **the Meeting recommends the strengthening of diagnostic capacities at the national level and assistance to Governments, at their request, in the identification of priorities and the definition of strategies for progressive institutional and administrative reform**.

12. More specifically, the Meeting recommends the consideration of three sets of activities, corresponding to three levels of cascading concerns. On the uppermost level are the effects and implications of a process of change propelled by globalization, technological developments, the spread of education, urbanization, and the growth of an articulate and proactive civil society in many countries. These have generated pressures on traditional structures of government and public administration, which no longer correspond to contemporary exigencies. Shortcomings have been felt particularly in two areas: decision-making and service delivery. In both cases, they reflect the rising expectation of citizens and clients to be consulted and heard, and the difficulty experienced by bureaucratic structures to adjust to this phenomenon and to become responsive to diverse clients' needs. In the face of this new challenge, **the Meeting recommends that the United Nations explore the need for and help to design new structures, based on international experience, that optimize the involvement of citizens and users, in partnership with government, through transparent processes that secure community support for and cooperation in public programmes and policies and yield essential feedback on their results**.

13. The Meeting notes the emergence of important networks at the global, regional and subregional levels. **The Meeting recommends the study of this phenomenon, with a particular focus on the needs of the citizens and end-users**. Acknowledging the trends, which on a global scale have modified the role of the State, should not obscure the fact that the State alone commands the needed capacity to address and resolve the most difficult problems that society must face. **Given the complexity of current problems**

worldwide and the pace of global transformations, the capacities of Governments to manage change and handle crises effectively should be reinforced. Although it has been argued that States should disengage from the direct production of goods and services, that they should "steer and not row", experience in some countries has demonstrated that this may not be possible in every case. Therefore, assistance in **reinforcing government capacities in service delivery should take fully into account the particular exigencies and context in each country**.

14. **The Group of Experts feels that in a number of countries and fields of state activity, reinforcement of the traditional administrative structures must be accorded precedence, especially in those cases where the provision of services vital to the citizenry is concerned. The United Nations Programme should provide assistance, at the request of Governments, for national efforts worldwide to modernize and strengthen administrative systems in light of changing needs. Particular attention should be paid to human resources development in the public service**. The Group of Experts notes that in a number of countries, the status and attractiveness of public service employment has suffered a decline, with negative results for the performance of civil servants. It is time to consider the costs of low remuneration in the public sector. **Civil service reform and modernization must be given the priority that they deserve**.

15. **In this connection, the Meeting notes the special problems of countries with economies in transition, notably in Eastern and Central Europe. It takes the view that all the countries concerned could benefit from an exchange of experience and cooperation in ongoing reform processes, especially in regard to laws and regulations on the civil service. The Meeting also notes the importance given worldwide to policies and programmes intended to reinforce the competence base, professionalism, ethical standards and values of the public service. The Meeting recommends that the United Nations Programme continue and expand its activities in pursuit of these objectives**.

16. The Meeting takes the view that strengthening the State and modernizing the civil service structures, processes and personnel are fully compatible with parallel demands for and the pursuit of de-bureaucratization. **De-bureaucratization calls for greater openness in government and for a public service "with a human face". The Meeting recommends that the United Nations Programme continue and expand its activities in this direction**. Particular attention needs to be paid to the design and reinforcement of structures that are responsive to citizens and seek to bring the client and end-user into the consultative process. **Measures should be developed to strengthen mechanisms of feedback, transparency and accountability at all levels of government**.

17. The United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance has a special role to play in support of reform efforts and in facilitating the exchange of information on research and ideas reflecting current thinking and experience. **The Meeting recommends that although part of this research may have reference primarily to a limited number of countries, its findings should be disseminated through the information clearing house, as well as other means on a worldwide basis. Greater availability of relevant comparative data will also be of assistance in measuring performance in public administration**.

18. **The United Nations Programme should promote the culture and practice of performance measurement and make recommendations on strategies to that effect. It should apply performance measurement to current government operations but also to comprehensive full-cost accounting and strategic planning. It should encourage the design of performance indicators that are people-centred, that is, emphasizing the impact on sustainable human development. The United Nations should concentrate on developing indicators that are simple, clear and understandable to all people**. These performance indicators can eventually result in realistic target-setting and benchmarking to best practices. In supporting research and strategic efforts toward the implementation of performance measurement, the United Nations should maximize its impact by focusing on performance measurement initiatives at regional and national public administration organizations.

19. **Monitoring, measuring and evaluating public-sector performance should continue as a priority for research and capacity-building**. Without such indices, few Governments know how well they are performing and how best they may be able to satisfy public expectations. Detailed measures, which take much time and effort to apply, are not such a high priority as relatively simple, clear, straightforward measures that show programme results or outputs. There is a need to show results that ordinary people can understand and appreciate, even if the results prove disappointing or reveal that programmes have been ineffective or inadequate, which in any case the public ought to know. **The implication is clear in terms of the high-level commitment that is needed, both internationally and nationally. The United Nations should adopt performance measurement as part of its own reform process. It should**

commit resources to performance measurement as a legal and moral responsibility, making the data and conclusions available to all stakeholders. The establishment of a "performance culture" is an important element in developing a code of conduct for the public service, international and national.

Emerging trends in public finance and private-sector development

20. **The Meeting of Experts recommends that Governments promote competition proactively and also act in a restraining role, instituting enforceable frameworks that guarantee private property rights and contracts, conserve the environment, protect consumers against monopoly abuse, restrictive business practices and imperfect information, and ensure the health and safety of workers and the public at large.** In this connection, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in his report on entrepreneurship and privatization for economic growth and sustainable development (A/52/428), has stressed that an adequate legal framework is vital for developing an enabling environment in which businesses can easily be created and operated.

21. "Single window" clearance should assist new business start-ups, e.g., in getting approvals and licenses, obtaining credit and understanding tax and reporting requirements. Red tape should be reduced and regulations abolished or simplified so as to draw enterprises into the formal sector and reduce compliance costs. Special consideration should be given to enterprise reform including conversion of military enterprises, small and medium enterprises (SME) development and the transit of informal enterprises to the formal sector. **The Meeting of Experts recommends that the United Nations system assist Member States in understanding alternative models of corporate governance, based on examples of success and failure, with a view to public enterprise reform and promotion of SMEs, and also assist Governments in sensitization programmes for civil servants to promote understanding of business, change often hostile attitudes and build corporate governance capacity.**

22. **Governments should prepare continuation-level budgets, based on existing legal commitments, ongoing projects, debt-service burdens, tax rates, and expected gross domestic product, inflation, caseload growth and cost-of-living adjustments.** These will reveal what new commitments, if any, can be taken on in the coming fiscal year. Where revenues and expenditures are volatile from year to year, these budgets should be part of two-to-three-year fiscal plans.

23. **Tax revenues should be increased by widening the tax base, raising voluntary compliance, enforcing administrative and legislative measures to prevent tax evasion and avoidance, devising new methods of tax collection (taking advantage of developments in information technology) and upgrading the skills of tax officials, especially in international taxation, new financial instruments for transferring funds across national boundaries and transfer-pricing.** Since the artificial jurisdictional rules of international taxation have had a significant impact on the revenues of developing countries, there is a need to rationalize the provisions of double taxation conventions.

24. **The transparent publication of annual performance reports by each agency should serve as a deterrent to corruption. Some other information should be provided on a fee basis so as to cover the cost of providing it. The International Monetary Fund code of good practices on fiscal transparency should be supported by the United Nations family by dissemination to the field, by country assessments of degrees of adherence to the code and by devising programmes to improve transparency and accountability with technical advice to Governments, where necessary. Risk management should be developed in the government sector as in the corporate sector.** Approaches should be preventive, persuasive and, where necessary, coercive. The International Monetary Fund may wish to consider supplementing its *Balance of Payments Manual* with a code of transparency on external transactions. This would reduce the risk of future currency crises by providing assurance to holders of currency-denominated securities.

25. **Technical resources should be made available to Member States, upon request, in order to support anti-corruption and increased transparency activities.** State audit offices are often in the best position to review and provide assurances about the integrity, relevance and completeness of government-prepared information, such as annual financial statements. To increase public trust in government and to act as a deterrent to improper activities, State audit offices should be independent from the executive and the judiciary; should be given sufficient resources to fulfill their mandated responsibilities; and should have a scope of work that includes financial audit, compliance with legislated authorities and the right to carry out periodic value-for-money examinations.

Basic data on public administration and finance for policy-making purposes

26. **The Meeting recommends that the United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance elaborate a framework for the collection of internationally comparable data, including qualitative as well as quantitative indicators, for the purpose of measuring the changing role of the State as reflected in privatization, deregulation and decentralization.**

27. **The United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance should act as a clearing house for new methodologies in the management of the public sector. Access to information on best practices can assist countries in their application of new public sector management tools and facilitate the comparison of relevant national experiences.**

28. **To counter the tendency for the world to be divided into "networked" and "isolated" countries, the United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance should serve as a facilitator in the exchange of information via the Internet, focusing on the provision of advisory services, particularly to least developed and geographically isolated countries, in order to improve accessibility to the Internet at all levels of government.**

29. **The United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance ought to contribute to incorporation of the public sector into early warning systems for political and economic crises. This requires the elaboration of an appropriate system of indicators, based on appropriate and timely political, social and economic data.**

30. **The Meeting recognizes and stresses that the key role of the United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance lies in developing and managing the global network of institutions, both governmental and non-governmental, so as to foster linkages and promote cross-fertilization and synergies. Some mechanisms for this coordination should be established, particularly with respect to regional organizations.**

31. In view of the multiplicity of actors in this field, these coordinating mechanisms should avoid duplication and facilitate contributions from multiple actors. **In this respect, the Meeting recommends that the principle of subsidiarity be adopted so that issues may be covered and activities carried out by those organizations and at those levels at which comparative advantages exist.** Following the information provided by the Director on the inter-agency meeting, that took place in conjunction with the Fourteenth Meeting, the Group of Experts welcomes the establishment of a consultative mechanism among agencies of the United Nations system to coordinate the activities in implementation of Assembly resolution 50/225.

32. **The Meeting of Experts wishes to stress the role of the Programme in fostering the exchange of information on best practices. Therefore, it strongly welcomes the establishment of the information clearing house World Wide Web site as the centrepiece for the performance of the role of facilitator in the information exchange. The Web site, in particular, would be a useful tool in the management of the global network. The Meeting takes the view that it is also important for the Programme to pursue initiatives relating to the collection of data on the public sector for policy-making purposes. In this respect, the Meeting will make more specific recommendations under a separate agenda item.**

33. **The Meeting of Experts recommends that special attention be given by the Programme to the relationship between public administration and the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences, including the resumed fiftieth session of the General Assembly, and that, in this connection, particular emphasis be placed on activities that build the capacity of Member States to implement the commitments made at those conferences.** In fact, capacity-building is one of the areas on which the Programme should concentrate so as to enable the recipient countries to carry out their own activities, initially supported by technical cooperation. In this respect, the Programme could perform a very useful task by assessing the impact of technical cooperation programmes carried out by various organizations.

34. It has been observed that a number of effective reforms efforts undertaken in many countries have not been properly documented and analysed. **The Meeting recommends that the United Nations collect, document and analyse these practices and programmes, which could be useful for countries in comparable circumstances. Similarly, findings from technical cooperation programmes provided to the countries, at their request, could be clustered, documented and used as inputs to workshops. This would serve to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Special emphasis is placed on the role of fostering South-South exchanges.**

35. The Meeting takes note of the clarifications provided by the Director on the new modalities of technical cooperation that will be adopted by the Division as a result of restructuring of the United Nations Secretariat. In

particular, it notes the plan to concentrate on policy development, policy dialogue, innovative and demonstration-type projects, as well as the provision of technical and substantive inputs, such as needs assessments, advisory services, project formulation and evaluation. In this respect, the more operational aspects of technical cooperation would be the primary responsibility of the United Nations Development Programme and other operational entities within the United Nations system.

36. The Meeting of Experts also suggests that in choosing, prioritizing and consolidating its areas of work, the United Nations Secretariat could benefit from the assistance of a small programme committee of the Meeting of Experts, which could meet before the regular meeting and do preparatory work on this item. The Group of Experts observes that considerable work has been accomplished by the Programme already and successful outcomes have been achieved. However, these successes have not been adequately publicized. Therefore, **it is recommended that the Division make efforts to document and publicize these efforts more widely in order to promote the Programme. In this same spirit, it is also suggested that a seminar be organized on public administration to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the public administration programme.**

37. The Meeting of Experts recommends that the necessary organization and managerial measures be taken by the Director of the Division for Public Economics and Public Administration of the United Nations Secretariat so as to enhance the capacity and effectiveness of the Division to implement the recommendations of the Meeting.

III. Work of the Fourteenth Meeting of Experts on the United Nations programme in public administration

A. Public administration and the implementation of commitments made at major United Nations conferences

38. The Fourteenth Meeting of Experts discussed the above theme on the basis of the report prepared by the Secretariat entitled "Relationship between public administration and the implementation of commitments made at United Nations conferences" (ST/SG/AC.6/1998/L.2). The report focused on the United Nations-sponsored major global conferences in the last decade, which served to highlight important problem areas for the world as a whole. Taken together, the outcomes of those conferences constitute a set of imperatives for Governments, but although they have specified what needs to be done they have not elaborated on "how" this may be done. Since the responsibility for actual implementation falls on the Governments and their administrations, capacity-building is a necessary prerequisite for achieving these objectives. In view of its overarching mandate in the economic, governance and social spheres, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat must play a special role in this regard, in close cooperation and coordination with other entities and agencies of the United Nations system.

Issues

39. The various conference documents have called upon Governments to expand existing services, reorient activities or develop new programmes to meet new unmet needs. One of the primary problems, in this regard, is lack of thorough consideration of the follow-through. It is also clear that Governments will need to allocate additional resources in order to implement some of the action plans. Specific country circumstances, such as the level and type of economic, social and political development, will determine to what extent Governments, the private sector and civil society at large will be able to respond and integrate their efforts to this effect. Cognizant of the need to acknowledge both the commonalities and differences among Member States, the Meeting of Experts, however, recommended that the Programme focus attention on four broad areas of need:

(a) *Management of change*: the State must be in the forefront of implementing change and smoothing the path for progress. This entails proactive measures to develop enabling policy frameworks, promote the use of new technologies, set up performance measurement and evaluation systems, overhaul administrative structures, and design adequate patterns for the collection of internationally comparable, reliable and accurate data for policy-making purposes;

(b) *Institution-building and administrative reform*: in the light of current trends, bureaucratic structures no longer work effectively. De-bureaucratization and decentralization must go in tandem with new approaches to management exemplifying openness, adaptability, participation, flexibility, diversity and responsiveness. Many new tasks of governance require public authorities to act as mediators, advocates or promoters, actively seeking partnerships with business and non-governmental

organizations, or otherwise endeavouring to engage civil society in the pursuit of developmental objectives;

(c) *Human resources development*: constantly upgrading skills, developing leadership qualities, facilitating change and fostering a new image for the public service call for new career structures that emphasize mobility, the importance of integrity and professionalism and the overriding claims of merit in the recruitment, placement and promotion of public servants;

(d) *Information*: timely availability of adequate, reliable, accurate and relevant data has become sine qua non not only for sound policy-making but also for the measurement, monitoring and evaluation of public-sector performance. The United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance can play a vital role in mobilizing and disseminating such information of vital importance to Governments, notably through the projected information clearing house.

40. Additional concerns were raised with regard to the overall structure and resource base needed to meet the requirements of developing countries, with a view to the fulfilment of commitments emanating from the major United Nations conferences. It was noted, in this connection, that there was a disparity in the resources available for post-conference implementation compared to those mobilized for pre-conference preparation and participation. The Meeting considered that this matter should be reviewed, in the light of the overall need to strengthen coordination in the design, implementation and evaluation of public administration and broader public-sector programmes.

B. Key issues and emerging trends in governance

Issues in governance and public administration

41. Differing concepts of governance notwithstanding, the Meeting of Experts evinced an emerging consensus on the relative importance of certain core categories, including respect for legality, the rule of law, a democratic State, and an effective machinery for the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public policies and programmes. Improving the quality of governance, accordingly, depends to a large extent on institution-building and capacity reinforcement in the above-mentioned areas. The task is complicated, in many States, by lack of integration among the constituents units of the country's population and the need to develop a national consensus as a necessary prerequisite to reinforcing the legitimacy of the State.

42. Demands for better governance add urgency to plans for reform at both the central and local levels. Looking to the twenty-first century, major trends appear to fall into two categories: systemic and strategic. Systemic factors are: increased demands for broad participation of citizens and for the rule of law; demands that the regulatory role of the State be redirected in order to bolster creativity of the individual; and finally, demands that the public service act as a trustee of the system. As for the strategic factors, they include: quality of performance in the public sector; time efficiency and action-orientation; group dynamics that will improve service delivery; and strengthening professionalism in the conduct of public affairs.

43. Emerging from these trends are programme needs or emphases, which fall into three main areas: (a) more concentration on people; (b) better use of new technologies for improved communication and information; and © support for improved policy-making. Sound governance, human rights and sustainable human development are considered as the ultimate objectives of the United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance. They encompass the quest for equity, accountability, transparency, professionalism and ethics, and they must all be tackled in a synergic manner. More interaction is needed between administrative and political concerns in order to assist the democratization process. In this connection, the following two issues elicited attention:

(a) Review of the electoral system, in particular at the local level, with a view to the better protection of minority groups and creation of alternative modalities of representation, in order to safeguard the cultural pluralism and local specificities;

(b) In Africa, the need for comprehensive reform of the judicial system calls for an extensive comparison of common law principles with those of francophone countries; the merger of modern and customary laws and their incorporation into a uniform and comprehensive legal system; and the conceptualization and promulgation of judicial norms that can serve not as constraining rules but rather as flexible guidelines and reference standards. On a more basic level, however, there is a pressing need to upgrade the capability and institutional effectiveness of the justice system in order to maintain and reinforce public confidence in the system.

Issues in performance monitoring and evaluation

44. In its resolution 50/225, in paragraph 11 of which it called for enhancement of the effectiveness of the United Nations activities in public administration and development, the General Assembly drew attention to the importance of monitoring, measuring and evaluating performance in this context. According to the Meeting, these tasks form an integral part of reforms to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of government and improve its capacity to make policy and gain greater transparency and accountability to the public. Four elements of those reforms deserve special attention, as described below.

45. First, the concept of partnership between public-sector, private-sector and non-profit organizations: this changes the role of government from sole provider of public services to a more complex role of founder, lender, contractor, purchaser or regulator. Older forms of control in this situation are likely to be only partially effective. Decentralization and devolution, as well as contracting out to private and non-profit providers, demand means to ascertain that providers are actually delivering good quality and acceptable services. Second, the public's right to know: performance measures respond to the following questions: "How are we doing?" and "What is going on?" Third, performance measurement and programme evaluation as elements in decision-making and strategic planning: they should help to provide a means by which public organizations become and remain self-conscious regarding their objectives and the means that they use to attain them. The requirement to measure the results of programmes should act as a catalyst for improvement, for the more effective allocation of scarce resources and for the reconsideration of priorities. Fourth, the scope of these tasks: performance measurement, monitoring and evaluation go beyond traditional forms of accountability. It is no longer enough to audit only for legality and financial propriety. Public trust requires public accountability, value for money and assurance that the public interest is foremost in the Government's consideration. Performance audits, annual reports and regular accounting for results are now viewed as essential.

46. Transition from the stage of conceptualization to that of implementation and institutionalization of performance monitoring, measurement and evaluation raises a set of questions to which there are no predetermined replies. Experience indicates the need to address those questions in light of the overall context in which a particular Government or organization operates, avoiding excessive expectations, or faith in simplistic formulas. Performance measurement is a strategy and a tool, not an end in itself. It is a holistic technique that can be effectively linked to many systems, including budgeting and accounting, strategic planning, auditing, internal management and client communication systems. Although the linkage between government programmes and results is difficult to establish, it is still necessary to make the creative effort to design and direct those measures. Results-oriented performance indicators can also emphasize coordination and interorganizational cooperation because for the most part, various organizations contribute their inputs and outputs to achieve successful government operations.

C. Emerging trends in public finance and private-sector development

47. The overall goal of the State remains to improve the lives of the people, however methods and modalities for attaining this goal are changing. Although the role of government as policy maker remains unchanged, it is shifting from being owner-operator to partner and regulator. Governments are recognizing that markets need assurances on property rights, including universality, exclusivity and transferability freedom of contract. They are responding and adjusting to the dynamic challenges of this process. Fiscal management, like public management generally, is in a state of flux. And although the objectives of public finance remain allocative, redistributive and stabilizational according to the traditional Musgravian model, its scope is being reduced in different ways, by privatization, globalization and the "new managerialism". New approaches frequently involve organizational restructuring, market testing, results-oriented budgeting and cost accounting. Service contracting, turnkey construction, leasing, management contracts and build-operate-transfer contracts are some of the legal instruments for this movement out of the traditional public sector that are being tried.

48. Decentralized participation in budget formulation and monitoring by those affected have been facilitated by rapid developments in information technology. However, in many countries the main constraint is still low telephone penetration. The growing scale of informal economic activity is causing Governments to devise ways and means of bringing them into the formal fold. Opportunities for corruption have been reduced by the liberalization of trade but increased by privatization. Abuse of public office for private gain has had a corroding impact on development initiatives and society in general. Comprehensive efforts to reduce corruption can significantly reduce its incidence.

Empirical studies indicate that corruption lowers investment and economic growth.

49. In addition to the changing role of the State, modifications in fiscal management, trends toward decentralization and the need to improve governance over corruption, globalization is creating new pressures to participate in and benefit from expanding global markets. In this respect, Nation States are conforming to the free trade and non-discriminatory rule of the World Trade Organization and initiatives to harmonize rules on investment are being considered. Globalization is creating pressures to harmonize legal and regulatory frameworks, both domestically and in regional groupings.

Issues

50. Public investment plans are often considered sacrosanct, covered by separate budgets (development budgets) and treated as more growth-oriented than current expenditure budgets, even where existing assets are underutilized and underfunded. All expenditures should face the same criteria, such as value-for-money. Capital projects should earn at least the cost of capital used in them. Furthermore, studies have shown that traditional government procurement is often at high cost due to centralized and elaborate tender procedures. As one expert has noted, buying off-the-shelf items – relying, in effect, on market mechanisms, where reputation and competition ensure that prices are in line with quality – may actually save Governments substantial sums of money.

51. Poor analytical capacities in many spending agencies, coupled with dependence on foreign aid, which is often planned and managed outside the government systems, continue to bedevil rational and comprehensive budget management. A continuing preoccupation is the lack of transparency and citizen participation in policy and project formulation and monitoring. In some countries, the government budget process is based on published assumptions and preceded by public-private consultation, particularly with business leaders, unions and the media, then followed by publicity and explanation, as in Malaysia, New Zealand and Singapore. Machinery for consultation includes consultative assemblies, people's committees and citizen groups. A major determinant in the cost of doing government business is institutionalized distrust. Delegation and decentralization raise the effectiveness of expenditure, but implementation is severely limited by the unwillingness of those at the centre to relinquish power and trust others. Trust must also be earned. In many countries, corruption is widespread and endemic, procedures are cumbersome and excessively subdivided, and the management culture prevents real delegation or decentralization.

52. Although it is important to raise government revenues in order to reduce budget deficits and the "crowding out" of private investment, there is increasing difficulty in raising tax revenues in the "network economy", due to: (a) constraints on a country's ability to set tax rates higher than other countries (with which it is competing for investment); (b) growth of the non-corporate sector, which is the most difficult to tax; © the ability of transnational enterprises to manipulate transfer prices and move income to low-tax jurisdictions; and (d) growth of new sources of income, such as electronic commerce and trading in derivatives. Global trends have increased pressures for financial and fiscal reform. Competition for foreign investment has grown, and recent financial crises have made some emerging markets less attractive to foreign direct investment. Domestic savings are mobilized through: (a) financial sector reforms (banking, insurance, pension and social security funds, etc.), (b) creation or improvement of capital markets, and © making savings (including contractual savings) a national priority. These are important areas where the State can continue its leading role in raising and channelling financial resources from households, corporations and public institutions.

53. Fiscal decentralization, where budgets are not hard or where lower-level bodies can borrow on capital markets, can result in loss of macroeconomic control and possibly legislative accountability as well. Local governments, however, have wide-ranging responsibilities that need vast amounts of new capital, such as water supply, but lack the power to raise revenues locally or to deal directly with donors, investors or banks. Decentralizing fiscal authority, while preserving hierarchical accountability, needs more sophisticated monitoring systems than those to which centralized agencies have been accustomed. Advances in computer networking are making it possible to meet the challenge at an affordable cost.

54. Governments engaged in macroeconomic reform are increasingly concerned that their progress is judged on their rate of privatization (change of ownership of assets), rather than on their record of deregulation, liberalization and introduction of competition. Although effective privatization has reduced subsidies to loss-making public enterprises, there is increasing doubt whether ownership matters for efficiency if public enterprises are run by autonomous and motivated management teams, as in Singapore, for example. Improvements in productivity and economic efficiency derive from competition. Governments should control the rate of transition, provide adequate regulation before

privatization and ensure that "rolling back" the State does not reduce people's access to basic social services.

D. Basic data on public administration and finance for policy-making purposes

55. The Meeting discussed data requirements for the public sector, basing their discussion on a document entitled "Basic data on public administration and finance for policy-making purposes". There was general agreement that existing macro-databases, such as the System of National Accounts, 1993, the IMF *Government Finance Statistics* series and the ILO *Employment Statistics* series provide a solid framework of definitions, concepts, indicators and data requirements. An acceptable international standard thus exists for collection and classifying data for the purpose of international and inter-temporal comparisons.

Issues

56. Although uniform definitions exist for the collection of information, public-sector data often cannot be compared across countries because of the existence of gaps in coverage and because different levels of government have different responsibilities in different countries. The United Nations and other international organizations can play a key role in this area by providing policy advice and technical cooperation, especially to developing and transitional economies, with a view to enhancing the accuracy, reliability, comparability and completeness of data. Several experts insisted that data are also required at the national level for strategic planning, policy development and programme evaluation. In fact, the main reason to collect data is to put it to use at the national level. Accordingly, reporting to international agencies ought properly to be subordinated to national priorities.

57. The Group of Experts agreed that before implementing requests for collection of new data, Governments must first evaluate the cost of data collection compared with the potential benefits of this information. In particular, any data collected must support national policy analysis, monitoring and programme evaluation. Indeed, it has been argued that existing data-collection efforts should similarly be subjected to a cost-benefit test. In any event, an adequate mix of aggregate and disaggregate data is essential to reflect the activities of the public sector at different levels of government, and also to measure the regional and local dimensions of government activity. Data collection is not an end in itself. Data requirements must be client-driven and assist citizens in their evaluation of government performance. Currently, many existing data have been collected with the needs of the investor in mind rather than the needs of ordinary citizens.

58. The Group of Experts expressed the view that the perceived need for data is strongly influenced by one's definition of the role and function of the State and of the public sector. This definition is currently undergoing considerable change due to increasing globalization of the world economy, technological progress and the emergence of a vibrant civil society, nationally and internationally. The changing role of the State is reflected in privatization, deregulation and decentralization. Measurement and evaluation of the effects of these policy changes require the elaboration of new qualitative and quantitative indicators.

59. Some experts emphasized the need to ensure high quality and reliability of data and to avoid deliberate manipulation and distortion for political ends. Improved access to such data is important if transparency in the public sector is to be increased. One expert went so far as to argue that we suffer not from lack of information but rather from an overload or excess of information. In his view, there is a lack of relevant and reliable information. What is required are data that are useful for the information of knowledge, eventually for the design and evaluation of public policies.

60. New technologies facilitate both the collection and the dissemination of data. National, regional and global databases can now be linked easily, giving countries ready access to international data for use in the development and evaluation of public policies. However, rapid advances in information technology, however beneficial, may well produce a widening gap between "networked countries" and "isolated countries".

61. The Meeting agreed that new concepts and methods should be applied to management of the public sector, including results-oriented, customer-based methods of evaluation, as well as measures of government performance. All these techniques require collection and assessment of specific data, because it is difficult to implement new methodologies without adequate data. Application of any new methodology requires careful evaluation of specific national conditions. In this, as in so many policy areas, the "one size fits all" approach does not work. Methodologies must be adjusted to fit each country's needs. By observing national experiences, it should be possible to define minimum data requirements for each methodology.

62. The Meeting noted that early warning systems to predict emerging intra-State and inter-State conflicts are useful to the extent that they facilitate the anticipation and possible prevention or early resolution of such conflicts.

Elements of such systems have already been established within the United Nations and IMF, but the public sector is generally ignored, except for indicators, such as the fiscal deficit and national debt.

E. Review of the United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance

63. The Experts reviewed the proposed programme of work contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the review of the United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance (ST/SG/AC.6/1998/L.5). The report was supplemented by presentations made by the Director of the Division for Public Economics and Public Administration and by a staff member of the Division, specifically on the implementation of the clearing house.

64. It was stressed by the Director that the proposed programme of work was an initial comprehensive list of all possible issues placed before the United Nations Secretariat, and that the advice of the Group of Experts was sought on which of those issues should be taken up by the Secretariat. The selection of key issues and areas on which the Programme in Public Administration and Finance should concentrate was also to be determined on the basis of discussions of the two agenda items devoted to key issues and emerging trends in governance, public administration and finance. It was, therefore, the overall results of the Meeting of Experts that would be utilized in finalizing the programme of work. It was felt that the Programme in Public Administration and Finance should concentrate particularly on those themes that would be of growing importance to the international community in the next decade (emerging global issues) since that was the primary role of the United Nations in many sectors. The Secretariat was requested to prioritize and consolidate its areas of intervention in the light of the recommendations of the Meeting.